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**Testimony of  
Jessica Fenner  
The Young Women's Leadership Program  
Before the Committee on Labor and Public Employees  
Tuesday, February 23, 2009**

**In Support of: S.B. 362, AAC Equal Pay for Equal Work**

Senator Prague, Representative Ryan and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women's (PCSW) Young Women's Leadership Program (YWLP).

The YWLP is dedicated to understanding and voicing the needs of Connecticut's young women ages 18-35. Today I speak in favor of SB 362, as it addresses a number of these needs.

As a graduate student at the University of Connecticut School of Social Work this issue of equal pay for equal work will have a direct impact on my future career in the social service realm. The Wage Project estimates that over a lifetime (47 years of full-time work) the wage gap amounts to a loss in wages for a woman of \$700,000 for a high school graduate, \$1.2 million for a college graduate and \$2 million for a professional school graduate.<sup>1</sup> Meaning that I will be disproportionately penalized for furthering my education and being a woman.

On behalf of young women across the State I urge you to pass S.B. 362, which will hold employers accountable to explain wage disparities based on a bona fide factor other than sex. Since the Equal Pay Act was signed in 1963, the wage gap has been closing at a very slow rate. In 1963, women who worked full-time, year-round made 59 cents on average for every dollar earned by men. In 2007, women earned 78 cents to men's dollar. That means that the wage gap has narrowed by a less than half a cent per year.<sup>2</sup> In short, women and their families stand to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars over a lifetime of work in our country.<sup>3</sup> S.B 362 will provide the General Assembly an opportunity to help make measurable gains in closing the wage gap.

The PCSW and YWLP appreciate the Labor Committee's commitment to Connecticut's young women and look forward to working with the committee to address this and related issues in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> National Committee on Pay Equity, *The Wage Gap Over Time: In Real Dollars Women See a Continuing Gap*

<sup>2</sup> National Committee on Pay Equity

<sup>3</sup> Center for American Progress Action Fund, *Lifetime Losses: The Career Wage Gap*. December 2008

